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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

CHANGING THE STORY: THE ROLE OF THE NARRATIVE IN THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF TERRORIST GROUPS

by

Dean J. Case II
Brian C. Mellen

December 2009

Thesis Advisor: John Arquilla
Second Reader: Hy Rothstein

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.			
1. AGENCY USE ONLY ***(Leave blank)***	**2. REPORT DATE** December 2009	**3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED** Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Changing the Story: The Role of the Narrative in the Success or Failure of Terrorist Groups		**5. FUNDING NUMBERS**	
6. AUTHOR(S) Dean J. Case II and Brian C. Mellen			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		**8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER**	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A		**10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER**	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.			
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited		**12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE**	

13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

This thesis focuses on the nexus between a terrorist group's narrative and the group's success or failure in achieving its strategic goals. This work theorizes that the interaction of competing narratives exerts a systematic impact on the ability of the terrorist group to achieve their strategic goals through the influence that the narratives have over a group's members, the group's adversary, and the affected population. Although a terrorist group with a good narrative can be defeated, a terrorist group with a weak narrative is much less likely to win. Consequently, in order for a terrorist group to improve its chances of prevailing, it needs a strong narrative. While issues like material shortfalls, the repressiveness of state security services, and changing demographics could contribute to the demise of a terrorist group, these factors also serve to demonstrate how difficult it is for a terrorist group with a weak narrative to generate enough support to overcome these deficits. Since narratives are not fixed, each side may choose to change their narrative in order to accurately address changing circumstances. Changes could follow shifts in policy, appointment of new leadership, and even changes of fortune.

14. SUBJECT TERMS National Security; Narratives; Terrorism			**15. NUMBER OF PAGES** 77
			16. PRICE CODE
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	**18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE** Unclassified	**19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT** Unclassified	**20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT** UU

NSN 7540-01-280-5500 Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239-18

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MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS

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This thesis focuses on the nexus between a terrorist group's narrative and the group's success or failure in achieving its strategic goals. This work theorizes that the interaction of competing narratives exerts a systematic impact on the ability of the terrorist group to achieve its strategic goals through the influence that the narratives have over a group's members, the group's adversary, and the affected population. Although a terrorist group with a good narrative can be defeated, a terrorist group with a weak narrative is much less likely to win. Consequently, in order for a terrorist group to improve its chances of prevailing, it needs a strong narrative. While issues like material shortfalls, the repressiveness of state security services, and changing demographics could contribute to the demise of a terrorist group, these factors also serve to demonstrate how difficult it is for a terrorist group with a weak narrative to generate enough support to overcome these deficits. Since narratives are not fixed, each side may choose to change their narrative in order to accurately address changing circumstances. Changes could follow shifts in policy, appointment of new leadership, and even changes of fortune.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONs

AQ	Al Qaeda
AQI	Al Qaeda in Iraq
CNC	Chechen National Congress
COL	Colonel
FM	Field Manual
IV	Independent Variable
JP	Joint Publication
KAU	Kenyan African Union
MG	Major General
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to express our sincerest appreciation and gratitude to our advisor, Dr. John Arquilla, for his direction, support, and patience during this thesis process.

We would also like to thank Dr. Hy Rothstein for sponsoring this study and serving as a second reader.

Lastly, we would like to express our love and gratitude to both of our families who encouraged and supported us during this process.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A GENERAL AREA OF RESEARCH

Our research focuses on the nexus between a terrorist group's narrative and the group's success or failure in achieving its strategic goals. For the purposes of our research, narratives are defined as "story models," the linked concepts that groups use to express their beliefs, state their goals, and encourage conformity.[1] We theorize that competing narratives exert a systemic impact on the ability of terrorist groups to achieve their strategic goals through the influence that the narratives have over their members, adversaries, and other affected populations.

Although a terrorist group with a good narrative can still be defeated, we also theorize that a terrorist group with a weak narrative is much less likely to win. Thus, our theory is probabilistic. Consequently, in order for a terrorist group to improve its chances of prevailing, it may need a strong narrative. While issues like material shortfalls, the repressiveness of state security services, infighting, and changing demographics could contribute to the demise of a terrorist group, these factors also serve to demonstrate how difficult it is for a terrorist group with a weak narrative to generate enough support to overcome these deficits. Since narratives are neither fixed nor infinitely malleable, each side has a window of opportunity in which they may choose to change their narrative in order to address changing circumstances effectively. Changes could follow shifts in policy, appointment of new leadership, or even reversals of fortune.

B. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this work is to define the relationship between terrorist groups' narratives and their success or failure in achieving their strategic goals. We will study cases where the terrorist groups have alternately met or failed to achieve their strategic goals and the relationship between the strength of their narrative and their ultimate success or failure. In cases where groups failed to achieve their strategic goals, we will

[1] T.R. Sarbin. Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct (New York: Praeger, 1986).

look for the conditions that changed relative to their narrative and strategic goals that negated any manipulative or motivational effect of their narrative. In cases where terrorist groups either ultimately triumphed or stalemated their opponents, we will look at the causal relationships as they affect our central hypothesis. Moreover, we will explore these relationships through case studies and describe how this theory might be applied to ongoing U.S. efforts in Afghanistan.

There are several reasons that motivate us to research how to defeat terrorist groups by defeating their narrative. The first motivation is that Joint Information Operations doctrine focuses almost exclusively on an opponent's decision cycle and does not include consideration of the effect of the mix of the narrative and the ability of a terrorist group to influence the targeted population. Second, we feel that existing theories of social movements and the existing literature on terrorist groups' narratives fail to explain the strategic interaction between competing narratives. Third, we hypothesize that there is a correlation between the legitimacy, or strength, of a group's narrative relative to an opponent's narrative and the group's success. Finally, our interest is related to our work as U.S. military officers dealing with information operations in Iraq.

Ultimately, our goal is to develop a framework that planners and policy makers can use to understand the interplay between competing narratives, and use this knowledge to frame strategic plans and policy appropriately. If successful, the framework will enable the development of plans and policy that help to defeat terrorist groups by ensuring that our efforts are focused on strengthening our narrative while devaluing a terrorist group's narrative. Consequently, the success of this model holds out the hope of contributing to the defeat of terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

C. BACKGROUND

The current focus of Joint Information Operations doctrine is on disrupting an adversary's decision-making cycle. This focus is almost entirely tactical and fails to consider the link between the adversary's narrative and strategic goals. One such example in *Joint Publication 3-13: Information Operations* states that information operations "are primarily concerned with affecting decisions and decision-making processes, while at the

same time defending friendly decision-making processes."[2] This sometimes results in mounting information operations that fail to address the elements of the adversary's narrative that are effectively manipulating and motivating members of the group and its targeted population. The direct consequence is the construction of a weak U.S. narrative that may be exploited by U.S. adversaries. This combustible mix of strong and weak narratives is a lesson that has not yet been learned and applied within the Department of Defense.

D. STATED HYPOTHESIS

A terrorist group generally succeeds when its narrative is stronger than, or equal to, its adversary's narrative. Simply put, in order to win, a terrorist group may need a good narrative. The quality of a narrative will be measured by four independent variables (IV), which are derived from the literature in cognitive psychology and social movement theory and will be discussed in detail in the following theory chapter:

Consistency: Congruity between a group's strategic goals and its narrative

Familiarity: The degree to which the themes contained within their narrative are already known to their target audience

Proof: The presence of observable indicators to support claims made by a group's narrative. These may either be resource related (relates to consistency) or in the form of doing what one sees others doing

Adaptability: The ability of a group's narrative to branch and change in order to address changing conditions

These four IVs encompass the elements generally necessary for a group to develop a good narrative. Without consistency, a group's narrative and actions might work at cross purposes. If a group's narrative does not use themes that are familiar to the target audience, their message will be less likely to pass successfully through cognitive filters, which are defined as the cognitive process that causes people to reject information

[2] United States Department of Defense. *Joint Publication 3–13: Information Operations* (Washington D.C.: 2006), I–6.

that does not conform to what they expect to hear.[3] Further, elements of proof need to be present that allow the audience to weigh claims made by a group concerning their narrative. Last, a group may need to change their narrative in order to ensure that it remains consistent with both their strategic goals and current environmental conditions, as well as counter their adversary's "response stories."

Figure 1 shows the process by which competing narratives are constructed, judged by the population, and adjusted by terrorists and counter-terrorists.

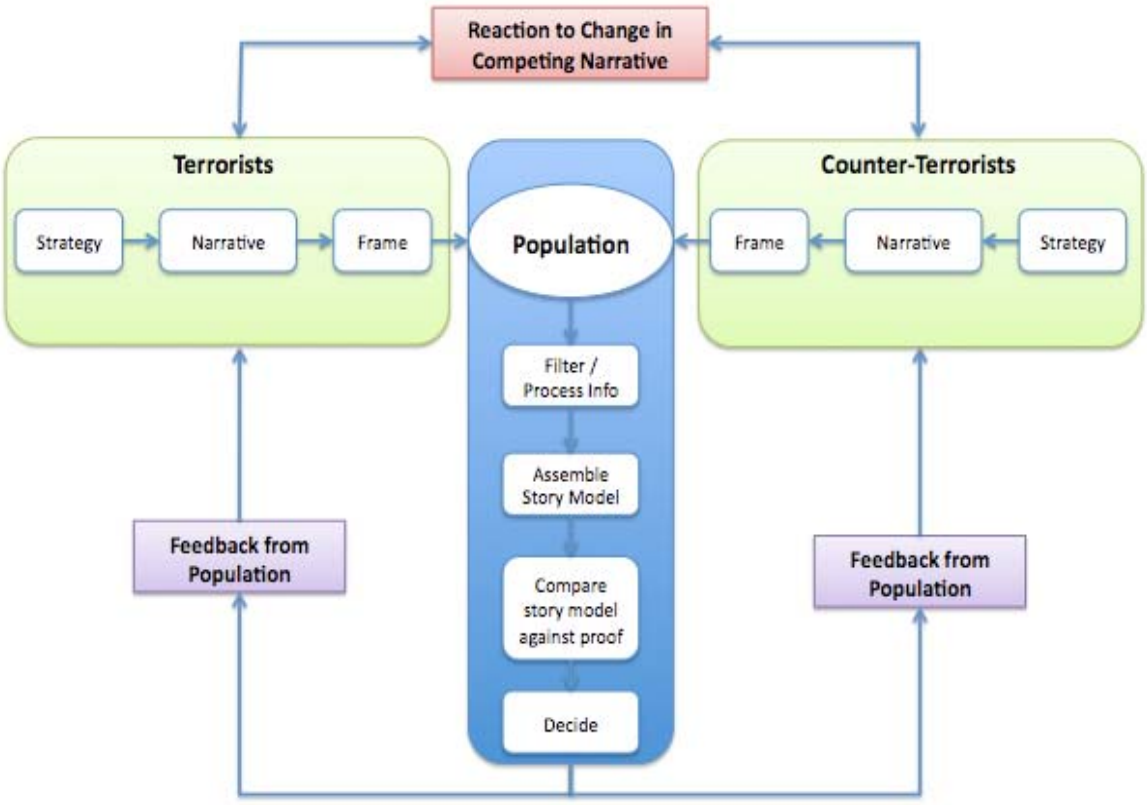

Figure 1. Narrative Flow Chart.

[3] Herbert A. Simon. *Models of Bounded Rationality: Empirically Grounded Economic Reasoning, Volume 3* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1982), 291.

In this model, we theorize that competing narratives serve to bridge the divide between a group's strategy and the frames they use to deliver their message. Likewise, Erving Goffman defined frames as a mechanism developed "for the interaction, constructed as the common practically realized understanding of the meaning and organizational premises of interaction—of 'what it is that is going on here.'"[4] These frames allow people to "locate, perceive, identify, and label seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms."[5] By aligning these frames with themes and images familiar to the target audience, a group is able to achieve narrative synergy. Thus they are able to deliver a message whose meaning transcends its content.[6]

When comparing competing narratives, the audience may operate much in the same way a jury operates during deliberation. First, competing frames are filtered and processed by the target audience. Next, the target audience reassembles the information in the form of a story model, which represents an individual's repackaging of a concept to fit his or her sense of bounded rationality. Bounded rationality is defined as an individual's cognitive limits, in terms of both knowledge and reasoning skills, that affect their decision making process.[7] Subsequently, this story model is weighed against the presence or absence of physical evidence to support a group's claims. The target audience then judges the two competing narratives and decides which one they will support.[8] Ultimately, feedback from the population's decision reaches both the terrorists and the counter-terrorists, who then have an opportunity to adjust their strategy, narrative, and frames.

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4 Erving Goffman. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 21.

5 Ibid.

6 Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," in *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol 26 (2000), 611–639.

7 Herbert A. Simon. *Models of Bounded Rationality*, 291.

8 Reid Hastie, Steven Penrod, and Nancy Pennington. *Inside the Jury* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983).

E. RESEARCH QUESTION: WHAT MAKES A GOOD NARRATIVE?

Our hypotheses are that a good narrative is one that is consistent with a group's strategic goals, employs frames that are generally familiar to the target audience, is supported by observable proof, and is adaptable to changes in the environment. Therefore, the 'group' will be our level of analysis.

We will use a case study methodology to test our hypotheses, as well as to explore our subsidiary research questions.

Following are the case studies we have selected:

The Kenyan Mau Mau Insurgency. Although the Kenyan rebels ultimately lost to the British during this rebellion against colonial rule, which ran from 1953 to 1960, it opened the door for Kenyan independence in 1963. In spite of huge material and military deficits and the fact that the rebels were nearly completely wiped out, the British granted virtually all of the group's political and social demands and a former insurgent became president of Kenya for decades.

Chechnya. The First Chechen War, which was fought from 1991 to 1997, ended with Russia signing a peace treaty that looked like a humiliating defeat. Although Russia enjoyed a significant material advantage, the Chechen rebels were able to leverage both strong internal consensus and popular support to their advantage against a Russian force that was largely demoralized. Following this victory, the Chechen narrative faltered, when "freedom fighters" came to be seen as terrorists by 2000.

Iraq's Sunni Awakening. In 2006–2007, Sunni tribes in Iraq joined a wave of reconciliation with the Government of Iraq and supporting Coalition Forces. This reconciliation marked the rejection of Al Qaeda in Iraq by the Sunni communities that they relied on for their support. The awakening was enabled by a significant change in U.S. goals and narrative and Al Qaeda's strategic and narrative stagnation.

We designed our structured, focused comparison and case selection using the Congruence Model, where "a small number of cases can be used for theory development."[9] These cases were selected due to their similarities with current operations in Afghanistan between the Taliban as the terrorists and the United States as the counter-terrorists. Likewise, the United States faces similar challenges combating terrorism in other areas like the Jolo region of the Philippines, Columbia, and Indonesia where similarities exist with this study's cases. In each case, the terrorist group involved initially possessed a stronger narrative than those of the counter-terrorists. In addition, each terrorist group achieved a large measure of initial success. Conversely, the one area where these cases differ from the current state of affairs in Afghanistan, where the terrorists have both the upper hand in the conflict and are in possession of a stronger narrative than the counter-terrorists.

Earlier cases, such as the American Revolutionary War and the United States' involvement in small wars in the Caribbean during the early twentieth century, were considered. However, due to the limited impact that technology played in the information environment, these cases posses limited value for this research project. Similarly, cases where a totalitarian regime suppressed a group of dissenters, like the Soviet repression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, do not positively contribute to this study due to the Soviets' insensitivity to the information environment.

Similar cases, such as the British defeat of insurgents in Malaya, Crete, and Qatar, were also considered. However, when Kenya is added to this series of British cases, the British triumph over the Mau Mau is an outlier. This is the one case among these four British campaigns where the information environment played a central role. The election of former rebel, Jomo Kenyatta, as the first democratically elected president of Kenya underscores this case's unique qualities.

Finally, cases where the terrorists win, such as the French experience in Algeria and the war in Vietnam, were considered and rejected, due to their limited value to this study. With regards to the Algerian case, the French started out with a weak narrative,

[9] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 181.

attempted to defeat their terrorist adversaries through force of arms alone, and even though the beat their adversaries militarily, they ultimately lost Algeria. The war in Vietnam is similar to Algeria and contains the additional element of an "outside" adversary; the Americans fought not only the indigenous Viet Cong insurgents, but the North Vietnamese as well.

F. SUBSIDIARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Is it possible to defeat an adversary just by beating their narrative?
- Do a group's strategic goals need to remain fixed over time in order to be effective?
- Is it possible for a group to win with a weak narrative?
- What conditions need to change in order to devalue an adversary's narrative?
- What is the relationship between the narrative and social movement theory?
- What is the role of the story model in the creation of a narrative?
- To what extent is a group's narrative co-created and dependent on their adversary's narrative?

G. ANALYTICAL MODEL

In order to better understand the role that cognitive psychology and social movement theory play in the role of competing narratives, it is necessary to take a closer look at the underlying theories involved.

The next chapter will link in general terms how these existing theories to our theory of competing narratives. This general model will then be applied to each of our cases in order to conduct our structured focused comparison. Our conclusion and recommendation will be formed from the comparison of the independent variables within each case.

II. THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY AND COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

The relationship between competing narratives, their effect on targeted populations, and ultimately their effectiveness is considerably more complex than a simple comparison of how they are crafted. In order to better understand the dynamics involved in the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable in this study, it is necessary to take a closer look at the underlying theories of cognitive psychology and social movement that are involved.

Largely about "mobilization," social movement theory explains the need for a good narrative to have consistency with a group's strategic goals and is adaptable to changes in the environment. Likewise, cognitive psychology provides understanding of the need to employ frames that are generally familiar to the target audience and to support a narrative's claims with observable proof.

A. GENERATING CONSENSUS FOR ACTION

Social movement theory explains how groups are able to act through the process of building internal consensus, generating external support, and justifying their actions.[10] Doug McAdam and David A. Snow define social movements as "a collectivity acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional channels for the purpose of promoting or resisting change."[11] Terrorist groups, counter-terrorists, and targeted populations are all manifestations of either competing or contested social movements. Terrorist groups and counter-terrorists act as agents of change who seek to gain popular support for their groups' goals, while affected populations seek to develop their own versions of consensus, to guide action in their best interests.

[10] Doug McAdam and David A. Snow, eds. *Social Movements: Readings on Their Emergence, Mobilization and Dynamics* (Los Angeles, Ca: Roxbury Publishing Company, 1997).

[11] Ibid., xviii.

A group's narrative serves as the primary medium that a group uses to communicate with internal and external audiences with the intent of building consensus, gain external support, and justify their actions.

First, a group must be able to build internal consensus to act. A group is able to do this by developing a narrative that is consistent with the group's strategic goals and sufficiently generalized to accommodate both a range of internal opinions and external conditions. However, there is a "sweet spot" in terms of the level of generalization needed in order for a narrative to generate this consensus. A narrative that is too narrow could result in the splintering of a group, while a narrative that is too broad becomes vague and seemingly indifferent.

Second, in order to generate the resources necessary to act, a group must be able to gain external support. Terrorist groups rely on the support, both active and tacit, from general populations in order to effectively operate. This provides a group with freedom of movement and access to resources. Most significantly among these resources is access to the targeted population, with the intent of compounding the effect gained by the creation of a mass social movement.

Finally, a group needs to be able to justify its actions. This is necessary in legitimizing their ways, means, and ends to internal and external audiences. As will be discussed later in this chapter, this justification becomes important when the targeted audience acts a jury to decide whether a group's claims and actions are legitimate.

B. COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY: THE ROLE OF FRAMES AND SOCIAL PROOF

Frames are necessary elements of any social movement. They are the cognitive means that a group uses to build internal consensus, generate external support, and justify actions. When comparing frames, these three separate elements need to be examined in terms of the problem they identify, the recommendation they make, and the action they are requiring from both internal and external audiences.[12] Typically, these three elements

[12] Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment" in *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol 26 (2000) : 611–639.

are expressed in the form of a "motivating trinity"[13] that labels the protagonist as good, the antagonist as bad, and justify the necessity of the conflict. Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow succinctly describe the reason that groups use frames:

> In part, as movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attribution regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change.[14]

Another important element contained within a frame are themes familiar to the target audience. By aligning frames with themes familiar to the target audience, a group is able to achieve narrative synergy. Similarly, by co-opting culturally familiar themes, audiences are generally less likely to filter out information contained within a given frame. This functions on the cognitive level since the frame expresses a message that conforms to the audience's sense of bounded rationality.[15] Bounded rationality is defined as the minimized model of the world that all people construct in order to effectively process all the potentially overwhelming information received from various, and sometimes competing, sources.

Frames are significant in the context of generating support for social movements. When effectively linked to themes and images familiar to the target audience, they represent an expedient means of succinctly providing information to the population from which a group is attempting to elicit support. The audience in turn "unpacks" the information contained in the frame and reassembles it to conform to their sense of bounded rationality.[16] Hastie, Penrod, and Pennington call the product of this process an individual's story model.[17] They then weigh this information against whatever proof exists to support a group's claims. Once the audience has reconstructed the information

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[13] Maurice Tugwell. "Terrorism as a Psychological Strategy," in *Case Studies in Psychological Operations*, ed. Janos Radvanyi (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985).

[14] Benford and Snow. *Framing Processes*, p. 615.

[15] Richard J. Heuer, Jr. "Cognitive Factors in Deception and Counter-deception," in *Strategic Military Deception*, eds. D. Daniel & K. Herbig, (New York: Pergamon, 1982).

[16] Reid Hastie, Steven Penrod, and Nancy Pennington. *Inside the Jury* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983).

[17] Ibid.

and assembled their story model, the audience then weighs the validity of a group's claims against the presence or absence of proof. Next individuals then render what is essentially a verdict. This verdict is not necessarily one of guilt or innocence, but rather one of legitimacy. Ultimately, a series of frames that effectively motivates intra-group consensus and motivates external support is deemed effective.

Consequently, frames play a large and central role in the development of social movements. Effectively constructed and employed, frames are able to help create movements able to overcome significant material deficits. This generally typifies the conditions experienced by insurgents or terrorists and further underscores the necessity of winning the war of the narrative.

C. COMPARING COMPETING NARRATIVES AND FRAMES

When comparing the competing narratives, the audience operates much in the same way a jury operates during its deliberations. First, each opposing side's story is taken and reconstructed by the individual so that it conforms to their sense of bounded rationality. Secondly, this repackaged story model is compared against the availability of proof to substantiate the story's claims. Thirdly, the story model is either legitimized or de-legitimized by the presence or absence of associated elements of proof. Finally, the individual makes a decision, or in the case of a jury member renders a verdict, in favor of one side's story.

While significant differences exist between members of a jury and a population in the midst of a struggle between a terrorist group and counter terrorists, the role played by competing narratives, frames, and proof is nearly identical. People, when making decisions to support or reject an insurgency operate in a manner similar to an evidence based jury; no matter how well scripted the argument, compelling evidence is required in order to gain majority support.[18]

[18] In their book, *Inside the Jury*, Reid, Hastie, and Pennington compare two types of juries; one that used evidence to determine a verdict and one that focused on verdict alone without comparing available evidence. The study determined that evidence based juries, who assembled story models to support their verdicts, were both more accurate in their determinations, and more likely to reach consensus than verdict-driven juries.

In this way, narratives serve much the same role that Jacques Ellul ascribes to propaganda. Both narratives and propaganda seek to address simultaneously the individual and the masses, reside at the intersection of social science and psychology, and both have an impact on popular opinion.[19] Yet a narrative itself is not propaganda. Once a narrative is manipulated, then it becomes propaganda. Conversely, not all propaganda uses a narrative to influence targeted audiences. An ad hominem attack is one example of propaganda that does not require a narrative. However, propaganda designed by a group to accomplish strategic goals needs to contain a narrative. In order to be effective, the propaganda needs to be managed to ensure consistency and clarity with both the group's goals and actions.

In the following chapters, three case studies will examine the role that narratives played in Kenya, Chechnya, and Iraq. In each case, the theories of social movement, cognitive psychology, frame analysis, and jury models will be used to assess the performance of this study's independent variables. The performance of these variables, both within and between cases, will serve to better illustrate the dynamics involved in the relationship between competing narratives.

[19] Jacques Ellul. *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (New York: Random House, 1965).

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III. SHIFTING TIDES OF TRUST: THE RISE AND FALL OF KENYA'S MAU MAU

The 1952 revolt by the Kikuyu tribe in Kenya against British colonial rule is an interesting case in irregular warfare where the state, in order to "win," had to concede to some of the demands of their insurgent adversary. Most notable among the reforms demanded by the rebelling Kikuyu, known as the Mau Mau, was their desire for equal treatment by the British controlled colonial administration.[20] One compelling example of the prevailing inequality can be seen in the British colonial government's restriction of Kenyans to farm lands only within designated "Reserves"—areas where the land was reserved for Africans only. Conversely, prime farmland, particularly that in Kenya's Central Highlands, was preserved for white European farmers.

In order to better understand the role played by competing narratives in the initial success of the terrorists and the counter-terrorists' ability to reverse their fortunes, this case will be divided into two phases. The first phase is the rise of the Mau Mau revolt, and the second is the period known as the emergency. Each of these phases is significant in that it marks distinct points in the evolution of the two competing narratives, as well as changing measures of success between the insurgents and their foes. During the rise of the Mau Mau revolt, the terrorists were able to leverage a superior narrative in order to overcome material deficiencies to gain the upper hand over the counter-terrorists. During the Emergency, the British adapted their narrative to changing conditions and formed pseudo-gangs primarily composed of former insurgents that led to the de-legitimization of the terrorists and their consequent defeat. During each of these phases, the contested tribal population acted like a jury, weighing claims made by both sides against observable proof before deciding which side to support. Initially, the Mau Mau's case had more observable proof than the claims made by the British. Alternately, the British by

[20] Wunyabari O. Maloba. *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 57.

changing their narrative, adapting the focus of their operations to support their narrative, and adapting frames familiar to the population, were eventually able to gain the upper hand.

A. THE RISE OF THE MAU MAU REVOLT

In its broadest context, the Mau Mau revolt has been described as a "nationalist, anti-colonial, peasant revolt" that lacked the cadres and organization associated with revolutionary movements.[21] At the essence of the underlying political and social causes behind the Mau Mau revolt was the belief that the Kenyans needed to be governed as "children" incapable of grasping democratic control of their own affairs.[22] One manifestation of this policy that created significant resentment among the Kikuyu tribe and helped to legitimize the Mau Mau were land policies that favored white European farmers at the expense of native Kenyans.

While the British policy is clear, they failed to provide proof to substantiate their claims. The supposedly superior European farmers were largely unable to run profitable farms and relied heavily on government subsidies in order to meet their basic needs. Similarly, in keeping with their self-appointed role as caretakers of their Kenyan charges, the British employed a narrative that supported this belief. This narrative was, in turn, expressed using language and images familiar to British administrators, but foreign to native Kenyans. Consequently, the British narrative touted the superiority of the colonial system, the inferiority of the native Africans, and reinforced their belief in the "white man's burden."

While the British examples in support of their colonial goals had a positive effect on an internal audience, the proof they provided had the opposite desired effect within the Kikuyu tribe. Forced relocation of Kikuyu squatters off land intended for European farmers, British elevation of loyalist supporters outside normal Kikuyu tribal stratification, and the condemnation of Kikuyu cultural practices were elements of the proof the Kikuyu perceived that undermined the efficacy of the British narrative.

[21] Wunyabari O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt,* 3.

[22] Wunyabari O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt*, 54.

Consequently, both the British narrative and its associated frame were only legitimate in the eyes of the British and their Kenyan loyalists. Instead of legitimizing their narrative, they served to empower the Mau Mau by providing opportunity for the rise of their nationalistic cause.

In opposition to the British, Jomo Kenyatta, a leader in the nationalist political party, the Kenya African Union (KAU), summed up his party's platform by stating that in additional to resolution of land issues,

> We want equal pay for equal work, we want good hospitals and good roads in the Reserves. We want education for our children, the same as that which is provided for the children of other races.[23]

Kenyatta's statement contains a succinct trinity that identifies the desire for equality, labels the adversary as promoting inequality, and establishes the legitimacy for this goal.

During this first phase of the revolt, the consistency between the Mau Mau's strategy, their narrative, and their frame was vastly superior to those employed the British. Initially, this provided a distinct advantage to the Mau Mau and they were correspondingly able to mobilize significant support for their movement and drive the British from their tribal areas. Consequently, the initial British plan to deal with the Mau Mau revolt was to focus exclusively on a military solution and to reject the idea of seeking a political compromise with the Mau Mau.[24]

[23] Wunyabari O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt,* 57.

[24] Wunyabari O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt,* 81.

	Strategic Goals	Narrative	Frame	Proof
Mau Mau	Nationalism	Equality	Collective Tribal frame Oaths	British land grabs Usurping tribal order
British	Preserve colonialism	European stewardship	European superiority	Land grabs Reserve system Unilateral control

Figure 2. Comparison of Pre-Emergency British and Mau Mau Narratives.

The Mau Mau, in order to mobilize support for their group used measures such as oaths to build trust among the tribal population. Employing oaths helped the Mau Mau capitalize on the deep and rich African tradition of using oaths to bind people together.[25] The British initially misunderstood the significance of these oaths and wrongly viewed the Mau Mau as a religious cult rather than recognizing them as a manifestation of rising African nationalism.

British mislabeling of the Mau Mau's motivation further serves as visible proof of the problem with the British narrative. The primary problem being the story model it generated was only legitimate to a British audience, and lacked credibility among the tribes. The result, when coupled with the brutal tactics the British initially employed to try and defeat the terrorists that were inconsistent with the British's stated goals, only served to shore up support for the terrorists among the population.[26]

B THE EMERGENCY

The period known as the Emergency that was initiated by the British in October 1952, and precipitated a violent response from the Mau Mau, marked both the high water point of this movement as well as the start of its demise.[27] The British initially lacked a

[25] Carl G. Roseberg, Jr. and John Nottingham. *The Myth of "Mau Mau": Nationalism in Kenya* (Washington, D.C.: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), 246.

[26] The British treatment of Kikuyu also earned scorn from the Church of Scotland Mission. Wunyabari O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt,* 87.

[27] Wunyabari O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt,* 88.

clear strategy to defeat the Mau Mau, and their efforts seemed to empower their adversaries, but the arrival of General Sir George Erskine as the Commander in Chief of the colony's armed forces in May 1953 marked a strategic turning point for the British.[28]

Central to this revamped British strategy under the leadership of Sir George Erskine, was the recognition that any long-term solution would have to include a political dimension. In the short term, this shift of policy was manifested in agricultural reforms, increased British support for tribal councils (composed of loyalists), and infrastructure improvements. These measures culminated with the first direct African elections in Kenya in 1957.[29] The revamped British narrative shifted focus from a justification of colonialism to a focus on law and order. The new trinity represented within this recast narrative was that the Mau Mau were a criminal group, that the British and their loyalist allies represented justice, and the necessity for law and order to triumph.[30]

Supporting this shift in narrative was a series of savvy measures by the British that neatly broke the bonds of trust between the Mau Mau and their support base. Recognizing that at its essence the Mau Mau was a peasant revolt that lacked outside support, the British took drastic measures to cut the lines of support that existed between the terrorists and the population. These measures included forcibly relocating members of the Kikuyu tribe onto guarded villages, restricting movement of Kikuyu between these villages, and interrogation teams to identify Mau Mau and their supporters. In return, compliant villages received ample basic needs items, increased medical care, more autonomy, and jobs in the Home Guard.

In order to break the Mau Mau oath, British screening teams required that both terrorists and their supporters confess their actions.[31] These confessions served three important purposes; first they caused a cognitive break between the individual and the terror group. Secondly, these confessions provided valuable intelligence to the British that were used in turn against the terrorists. Finally, by employing a frame with rich

[28] Wunyabari O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt,* 82.

[29] Carl G. Roseberg, Jr. and John Nottingham, *The Myth of "Mau Mau": Nationalism in Kenya,* 314.

[30] Wunyabari O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt,* 102.

[31] Wunyabari O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt,* 95.

meaning inside Christianity, the confession served as a way to undermine the tribal frame used by the Mau Mau. Ironically, the British then armed many of these former terrorists, formed them into pseudo-gangs, and then sent them into the Reserves to hunt their former comrades at arms.[32] Although not directly associated with the change in British narrative, pseudo gangs are representative of the shift in legitimacy and trust away from the terrorists and toward the counter-terrorists.

	Strategic Goals	Narrative	Frame	Proof
Mau Mau	Survival	Help the cause survive	Collective, tribal, oaths	Separated from population No external support
British	Population Security	Mau Mau are criminals Political Solution	Loyalist	Agricultural reforms Status for loyalists Direct elections Trials for Mau Mau Pseudo Gangs

Figure 3. Post-Emergency British and Mau Mau Narratives.

These measures drove both a physical and psychological wedge between the Mau Mau and the Kikuyu population. To support their changed narrative, the British provided overwhelming proof. Likewise, the British narrative was both more consistent with their stated goals where the proof they provided aligned directly with their stated goals. This shift from inconsistency to consistency was evident in the British shift from a colonial narrative, that was only considered legitimate by a British audience, to a narrative that centered on a political solution that was commonly understood and accepted. Alternately, the Mau Mau remained narratively fixed and found themselves increasingly isolated from the population. The very nature of the Mau Mau, as a peasant revolt, helps catalyze this isolation since they lacked the ideologues and intellectuals necessary to refocus their narrative and adapt to changing conditions. Further, by physically isolating the terrorists from the population, the counter-terrorists were able to control the feedback loop that the

[32] Wunyabari O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt*, 95.

Mau Mau would have relied on to identify ways their narrative needed to be changed. Ultimately, the changes to the British strategy, narrative, and frame, supported with ample proof to legitimize their claims, created conditions that resulted in the population overwhelmingly changing their support from the terrorists to the counter-terrorists.

C. SUMMARY

During the first phase of their revolt, the Mau Mau held a considerable narrative advantage over the British. First, their narrative was consistent with their strategic goals. Second, they used frames like oaths to communicate effectively within their tribes. Third, they were able to provide ample proof to substantiate their claims. And lastly, they were able to adapt their narrative to capitalize on heavy handed British reaction to their revolt.

Conversely, during this initial phase, the British used a narrative that was deficient in every way in the eyes of the targeted population. Their initial lack of consistency resulted from centering their narrative around the concept of colonialism and failing to provide proof to the Kikuyu to validate these claims. Their narrative was only legitimate, and relevant, when viewed through the eyes of White Europeans. Unwittingly, their reactions to the Mau Mau revolt played into the fortunes of the terrorists, and helped substantiate claims made against the British.

	Phase 1		Phase 2	
	Mau Mau	British	Mau Mau	British
Consistency	+	-	-	+
Familiarity	+	-	+	-
Proof	+	-	-	+
Adaptability	+	-	-	+

Figure 4. Comparison of the Performance of Each Independent Variable.

The British, however, were able to reverse their fortunes by changing both their strategy and their narrative in order to provide more consistent proof to the contested population. Of the two, the change in narrative is of greater singular importance. Had the British only changed their strategy, but failed to change their narrative, they would

have been left to develop ways and means that were unlikely to achieve the desired goals. Any given strategy, no matter how well crafted, can not begin to have an impact of the targeted population unless it is communicated within a narrative. Likewise, British efforts at population control were able to effectively sever ties between the terrorists and the population thus rendering the Mau Mau's efforts to adapt both their strategy and narrative nearly impossible.

Interestingly, by adapting both their strategy and their narrative, effectively controlling the population, and providing proof to substantiate their post-Emergency narrative, the British were able to win over the Mau Mau without having to achieve the same degree of familiarity their adversaries enjoyed. During the second phase, the British were able to provide more consistent evidence to substantiate their narrative claims, consequently leading to the population's verdict switching from the Mau Mau to supporting the British. Ultimately, this shift in support contributed to the British victory over the Mau Mau.

IV. SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF NARRATIVES IN THE CHECHEN WARS

Both modern Chechen Wars centered on Russia's use of power and control over Chechnya and its longing for independence. Throughout each period of conflict, the Russians sought to reaffirm their sense of superiority, achieve political and economic aims, and defeat the rebellious Chechens to attain internal security and defeat the criminality that was associated with them. In contrast, the Chechens wanted to gain the right to self-determination by continuing their history of resistance to Russian dominance and rule, which began in the nineteenth century.

The Chechen case study offers an excellent opportunity to evaluate the use and evolution of narratives throughout the conflict, and will be examined in two phases. The first phase is the First Chechen War (sometimes referred as Yeltsin's war), which occurred from 1993 to 1996. The second phase is the Second Chechen War (at times called Putin's war), that started in 1999 and continues today. Both phases are relevant due to changes in the narratives of both the Russians and the Chechens, and the relationship that those changes made to the success or failure in attaining each group's strategic goals. In the First Chechen War, the Chechen rebels were able to generate a superior narrative that appealed to the Chechen population and the world. Their narrative, combined with their tenacity as fighters, innovative doctrine and military organization, allowed for the defeat of Russian forces despite a huge disparity in both manpower and supplies. Alternately, the Russians were unwilling to appeal to Chechnya's population and lacked internal and external consensus from both the Russian people and the world respectively. However, in the Second Chechen War, the Russians seized on the concept of fighting terrorism to alter their narrative, which in turn enabled them to effectively harness both internal and external support. Moreover, they enacted several positive measures that addressed the Chechen population and encouraged them to support the Russians or remain neutral. The Chechen rebels, on the other hand, failed to adjust their narrative to the changing circumstances and thus lost the overwhelming support of the population that they had enjoyed in the first war. Further, they lost critical external

support based on the success of the change in the Russian narrative that was created using terrorist acts carried out by Chechen rebels. Moreover, they were unable to prove that they were true ethno-nationalist separatists seeking self-determination and independence rather than forming a religious society based on extremist ideology. While the military dimension between both wars remained relatively unchanged, it was changes to the narratives that led to a different outcome in the Second Chechen War.

A. THE FIRST CHECHEN WAR (1993–1996)

When the Russians invaded Chechnya on 11 December 1994, ostensibly to put a defiant republic in check, they unintentionally placed their entire government in jeopardy and exposed the many deficiencies of the Russian military.[33] Initially, a force of approximately 1,000–15,000 (the actual number is often debated) Chechen fighters defeated the Russians, despite having a significant material disadvantage. One explanation behind the Russian's defeat is that the Chechen rebels were able to generate significantly more internal consensus and external support through their use of a cohesive and compelling narrative.[34] Conversely, the Russians lacked a coherent narrative that impeded their ability to develop internal consensus for action as well as generate external support for their operations in Chechnya. Moreover, through their successful use of narratives, Chechen forces were able to create an effective social movement that contributed to the defeat of Russian forces and led to the signing of the cease-fire known as the *Khasavyurt Agreement*.[35]

B. THE CHECHEN REBELS' NARRATIVE IN THE FIRST WAR

Chechens are known for their strong sense of identity based on their traditions of independence, fearlessness, as well as their tribal and Islamic ideals. Their ties to their

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[33] Stephen J. Blank and Earls H. Tilford Jr. *Russia's Invasion of Chechnya: A Preliminary Assessment* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa: U.S. Army war College, 1995), 1.

[34] Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal. *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus (*New York: New York University Press, 1998), 188.

[35] The Khasavyurt Agreement "provides for the withdrawal of Russian troops, for future agreement 'on the basis of mutual relations between the Russian Federation and Chechen Republic to be reached by 31 December 2001' and for setting up of a joint commission to deal with specific issues in the interim". (Fowkes 1998 181–182).

land predate recorded history and the Chechens have a rich history of resisting the influence of their Northern Russian neighbors.[36] Consequently, when the Russians entered Chechnya to restore their control over the breakaway republic, Chechen rebels were able to leverage these proud and long-standing traditions in support of their cause.

The Chechen narrative contained the following three themes: resistance to Russian intervention, right to self-rule, and solidarity of the Umma. Each of these mutually supporting themes served to build internal consensus, generate external support, and legitimize the Chechen rebel's strategic goals. These three narrative components equally served to mobilize and promote resolve within the Chechen population and instill enthusiasm and perseverance amongst their warriors.

The first theme of their narrative was the legacy of struggle to resist Russian colonization of their lands. This idea evolved from the first clashes with the Russian Cossacks as they were pushing south and settling in Chechen territory, and once again with further encroachments under Czarist rule, and during communist expansion by the Soviet Union.[37]

The second theme is that of Chechen self-determination, which manifests itself in their desire for self-rule. While there is a long tradition of a yearning for self-determination throughout Chechen history, the best example and closest to the outbreak of war in 1994, comes in 1990 when the Chechen National Congress (CNC) was organized. The CNC wrote a resolution that pronounced, "The Chechen-Ingush Republic is a sovereign state, created as a result of the self determination of the Chechen and Ingush peoples" and that, "The Chechen-Ingush Republic has the attributes of a sovereign state: citizenship, a crest, a flag, a national anthem and a capital".[38]

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[36] Ben Fowkes. Russia and Chechnia: The Permanent Crises (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 2–3.

[37] Tony Wood, "The Case for Chechnya," in *New Left Review* (November-December 2004), http://newleftreview.org/A2533 (accessed May 22, 2009).

[38] Gall and de Waal 1998, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus*, 82.

Finally, the last major theme was solidarity of the Islamic community, or *Umma*, in the face of Russian domination. While Islam came relatively late to Chechnya (18th century), and Chechens in general are considered largely secular, there stands a firm tradition of Sufi Islam, despite past Russian attempts to stamp it out. During the 1994–1996 war, the Chechens often referred to their Russian enemies as "atheists" and felt that compared to them, they had no "personal or national identity" or "alleged codes of behavior" of the kind that "govern Chechen life and society". [39] The theme of Islamic solidarity, in the face of Russian domination, can best be summed up by the teaching of al-Yaraghi, who was a Naqshbandi leader in Chechnya in the 1820s, and said: "The prayers of slaves are not heard in Heaven."[40]

C. THE RUSSIAN NARRATIVE IN THE FIRST WAR

According to the Strategic Studies Institute's special report titled *Russia's Invasion of Chechnya*, Russia's motives for the Invasion of Chechnya included, "to preserve Russian integrity, enhancing Yeltsin's and/ or Grachev's stature, bolster the defense budget, overcoming internal political disaffection by a 'splendid little war', and suppressing a rebellion that threatened internal security and criminality".[41]

Consequently, by including political considerations in their decision to go to war with Chechnya, the Russians risked that their narrative would lack legitimacy not only with the Russian domestic audience, but also with the Russian military and the Chechen population. Ultimately, the result was a perfect storm of conditions that contributed directly to Russia's inability to maintain domestic support for the war in Chechnya, to win military battles and preserve good morale within the ranks of Russian soldiers in Chechnya, and legitimize their operations in the eyes of the Chechen population. Most important among these three failures was Russia's inability to try to win the battle for influence over the Chechen population.

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[39] Anatol Lieven. *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 356361.

[40] Lieven 1998, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power,* 34–35.

[41] Blank and Tilford 1995, *Russia's Invasion of Chechnya: A Preliminary Assessment,* 11.

Rather than trying to influence and enlist the population to either support the Russian cause or remain neutral, Russian strategy often kinetically targeted the Chechen population as an associated element of the rebellion. Further, instead of directing all of their actions at the fighters, the Russians conducted aerial and artillery bombardments of cities as reprisals for Chechen rebel success. Similarly, there is ample evidence that the Russian strategy and tactics did not favor positive interaction with the Chechen population. Russian troops would often take up positions outside urban areas and conduct mounted rather than dismounted patrols. Moreover, in instances where Russian Forces did come in contact with the population, there were often allegations of rape, torture, and unwarranted searches and seizure of property.[42]

Russia's lack of foresight played a significant role in the failure in Chechnya from 1993 to 1996. While Chechens are often seen as a unitary political entity that cannot be effectively engaged, this was not true prior or during the Russian invasion of Chechnya. In fact, the Russians failed to capitalize on two groups that could have aided the Russian cause if they were properly motivated. First, there were Chechens who were in favor of re-joining the Russian Federation. Second, there were Chechens who simply had no opinion on the political differences between the countries. The Russian failure to consider both a strategic and narrative frame that would address these groups, in conjunction with their openly selfish political motives, served to unite the Chechen population behind the rebels and cement Russia's defeat.[43]

A significant contributing factor to the outcome of the initial conflict was the successful use of narratives that enabled them to overcome the Russian's material advantage. Moreover, Russia's failure to produce a viable narrative effectively ceded competition for the Chechen's public's support to the rebels. This lopsided Chechen victory for influence over the population resulted in the formation of a strong and seemingly insurmountable Chechen social movement based on self-determination, resistance to Russian aggression, and Islamic solidarity.

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[42] Lieven, Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power, 126–131.

[43] Lievan, Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power, 126–131.

	Strategic Goals	Narrative	Frame	Proof
Chechen Rebels	Chechen independence	Resistance to Russian rule Self determination Religious solidarity	Tribal Sufi Islam	Effective resistance by the Chechen rebels and the population Gained cease fire
Russia	Restore Russian control	Russian superiority and power Quell rebellion to ensure internal security and defeat criminality	Political Economic	Lackluster military performance Kinetically targeted civilian population

Figure 5. Comparison of Chechen Rebel and Russian Narratives in the First Chechen War.

D. THE SECOND CHECHEN WAR (1999–)

The Second Chechen war began in the late summer of 1999 with the invasion of Dagestan (a small republic that borders Chechnya) by Chechen rebels who occupied several small towns for a period of a couple weeks. Subsequently, several terrorist attacks to include two apartment buildings that were demolished with explosives, which resulted in the killing of over 300 people in Moscow, were attributed (but never proved) to Chechen terrorists.[44] In reaction, Russian forces redeployed to Chechnya in October of 1999 by the order of the then new Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

Initially, the second Chechen war looked to be a mere continuation of the first, in that Russian forces displayed the ability to wreak havoc, yet could not manage the republic, nor could they win the adherence or loyalty of the population. In fact, in recapturing the city of Grozny in the early months of 2000, Russian forces suffered over 1,000 soldiers lost and further destroyed an already devastated city. Using almost three times as many troops as it had used in the First Chechen War, Russia managed to drive the Chechen rebel forces into the mountains by spring of the same year, as they had in the

[44] Masha Gessen. "Chechnya: What Drives the Separatists to Commit such Terrible Outrages?" *Slate* (September 4, 2004), http://slate.msn.com/id/2106287/ (accessed August 24, 2009).

first war. However, it did not take long for the Chechen Rebels to strike back. By the summer months, the rebels had reformed and managed to inflict heavy damage on Russian soldiers by staging several successful suicide attacks and ambushes.[45]

While at first glance the second Chechen war seemed to be an exact rerun, militarily, of the first, there were several differences that proved to be very important and paved the way for Russian success. First, during the pause of armed conflict between Russia and Chechnya in 1997 and 1998, Chechnya lost much of the unity that it had garnered during the first war due to the lack of adequate and effective government. This led to chaos and mayhem in the form of brutal murders, kidnappings, and violence that "quickly confirmed its reputation as a lawless society".[46] Secondly, Russia was able to control media coverage of the Second Chechen War, which allowed them to better shape and manage their narrative. Third, there is a notable increase in the presence of foreign Islamic extremists, particularly Wahhabis, who emerged to fight and regularly lead attacks against Russian forces and targets of opportunity.[47] Finally, and most importantly, is the increasing awareness and outrage directed against terrorists and terrorist acts by not only the Russian domestic audience, but also by the entire world. The Russian Government would utilize this indignation, especially after the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, to change their narrative and eventually change the outcome of the Second Chechen War.

E. THE RUSSIAN NARRATIVE IN THE SECOND WAR

The Russian narrative in the Second War gained traction as well as the attention of the world with the 9/11 attack on the United States. In fact, the first foreign governmental official to offer condolences and sympathy to the U.S. president was Russia's president, Vladimir Putin.[48] The Russians seized on the world's outrage and

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[45] Robert Seely. *Russo-Chechen Conflict, 1800-2000: A Deadly Embrace* (Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001), 304.

[46] Seely, *Russo-Chechen Conflict, 1800-2000: A Deadly Embrace*, 305.

[47] Seely, *Russo-Chechen Conflict, 1800-2000: A Deadly Embrace*, 305.

[48] Matthew Evangelista. *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2002).

almost immediately began to frame their narrative and associate the Chechen rebels and their cause with international terrorism. In an interview with Barbara Walters, Putin states:

> I should say at the time that I understand quite well that what the American people and the American leadership felt at that time. Because quite recently, in 1999, we were the victims of a terrorist attack. And I am not referring to Chechnya and the Caucasus. I'm referring to the explosion of residential buildings in Moscow and other cities as a result of which hundreds of innocent people died.[49]

Moreover, the Russian government began to provide proof in the form of linking key international terrorists, to include Osama Bin Laden, with the Chechen rebels. In addition, they asserted that there was evidence that Chechen fighters had been trained in Afghani terrorist training camps that were ran by Al Qaeda.[50]

Russia's reframing of their narrative, with respect to the Chechen conflict, seemed to be gaining momentum. While they had not convinced all of their detractors, they managed to influence major world leaders to include Germany's Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. When President Putin visited Germany on September 26, 2001, Schroeder remarked, "Regarding Chechnya, there will be and must be a more differential evaluation in world opinion".[51] The creation of positive world sentiment, with regard to Russian involvement in Chechnya, is the external consensus that the Russian government had been looking to establish.

In addition to gaining ground in world opinion, the Russian government continued to gain momentum with their own population. Greater and more effective censorship of the media was credited for shoring up popular support and curtailing the reports of atrocities and human rights abuses that dogged the Russians in the first war. Moreover, most Russians felt that action was needed against terrorist attacks in Russian cities and against the lawlessness and crime that seemed to be spreading to other republics directly

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[49] "Russia's Putin." *Free Republic* (November 9, 2001), http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/56751/posts (accessed Augst 25, 2009).

[50] Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?*, 180.

[51] Evangelista, *The Chechen Wars: Will Russia Go the Way of the Soviet Union?*, 182.

from Chechnya. Most importantly, Russian citizens were tired of losing. They lost in Afghanistan, the once mighty USSR had collapsed, and the last Chechen war was a disaster. Many wanted to return to a Russia that had the status of being a "superpower."[52] Lastly, not only did the fighting of the Second War gain support from the vast majority of the political factions and people within Russia, but the government gained increased credibility for standing up to the remaining Western criticism concerning the war in Chechnya.[53]

In the latter half of the Second Chechen War, the Russian government realized that they needed to improve their relationship and engagement of the Chechen population. The plan, at least partially, succeeded by using an effective combination of reconstruction, the embracement of Chechen ethnic identity and Sufi Islam, while acknowledging the Russian Government's authority. To this effect, the Government championed Ramzon Kadyrov, who is a former rebel with dubious ties to corruption and violence, and selected him as president of Chechnya in the spring of 2007.[54]

Mr. Kadyrov has overseen a remarkable reconstruction effort that has surprised even some of his detractors. Tanya Lokshina, who is a program director for the Moscow Helsinki Group, and a vocal critic of Russian policy and the appointed Chechen president stated, "Certainly some of this is façade, and for a while I thought that was how it was going to remain. But now they are really doing something. You can see the construction spreading."[55] With a great reduction in violence, life had returned to near-normal in major cities and even rural areas. Grozny, one of the most damaged cities in the country had functioning roads, electricity and water, and most goods could be found in the local

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[52] Oleg Orlov. "Why Russians Support the War in Chechnya." *Global Beat Syndicate (* November 23, 1999). http://www.bu.edu/globalbeat/syndiate/Orlov112399.html (accessed August 25, 2009).

[53] "Second Chechnya War - 1999-???" *Global Security.Org.* (2006). http:www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/chechnya2.htm (accessed August 25, 2009).

[54] C.J. Chivers. "Under Iron Hand of Russia's Proxy, a Chechen Revival." *nytimes.com.* (September 30, 2007). Http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/30/world/europe/30grozny.httml (accessed August 25, 2009).

[55] C.J. Chivers."Spring Rebuilding in Chechnya." *nytimes.com.* (May 2006). http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/world/europe/03iht-chech.html (accessed August 25, 2009).

market.[56] Most importantly, Russia, through their Chechen proxies, was providing proof and consistency regarding their narrative.

In addition to rebuilding critical infrastructure, the Russian government supported the moderate Sufi revival that was sweeping Chechnya. Although Sufism was the principle form of Islam practiced in Chechnya, Sufis had been persecuted and forced underground by the Soviet regime. By supporting the building of mosques and encouraging this moderate form of Islam, the Russian and Chechen governments hoped to counter extremist versions of Islam such as Wahhabism.[57] Further, they continued to build consensus with the population in order for them to remain neutral or not support the Chechen rebels by providing proof they were sincere in constructing a better Chechnya for the Chechen people.

F. THE CHECHEN NARRATIVE IN THE SECOND WAR

The Chechen narrative in the Second War failed to adapt to changes in the world and the region. With the rise of terrorism becoming a huge global and regional issue, the Chechen rebels nevertheless chose to become more radical. In addition, they were seen to embrace terrorism and extreme forms of radical Islamic religion. Moreover, they lost critical ties with the Chechen population. Finally, they seemed to lose sight of their strategic goal, which was to form an independent state of Chechnya.

While the Sufi religion has remained a significant part of Chechen society, other more radical forms of Islam have made their way into the region. Wahhabists, among others, were seen as responsible for Chechnya's instability based on importing a strong Muslim warrior culture formed from years of fighting Russian Forces in Afghanistan and later in Tajikistan. Further, for a disaffected and utterly poor Chechen youth, radical Islam provided a sense of community, and what has been termed as "spiritual refuge."[58] Unfortunately for the Chechen rebels, the shift or perceived shift to a more radical form

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[56] Paul Wallis. "Chechnya Reborn: The Russians Won the War, Human Rights the Issue." *Digital Journal (*September 30, 2007). http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/234969 (accessed August 25, 2009).

[57] Tom Parfitt. "The Battle for the Soul of Chechnya." *Guardian.co.uk.* (November 22, 2007). http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/nov/22/chechnya.tomparfitt (accessed August 25, 2009).

[58] Seely, *Russo-Chechen Conflict, 1800-2000: A Deadly Embrace,* 305.

of Islam, coupled with terrorist attacks attributed to them, coincided with Russian and world perceptions regarding terrorism. Events attributed to the rebels such as the hostage crises where more than 800 people were held in a Moscow theater for three days in 2002 and the 2004 hostage crises where 1,000 were held in a school did not help their credibility.[59] Further, in 2007, the leader of the remaining rebel force consisting of about 700 fighters, Doku Umarov, stated that he was expanding the war in Chechnya to include a "Holy War" against the United States, Israel, and Great Britain and that "all those waging war against Islam and Muslims are our enemies."[60] Actions of this type took the focus off the Chechen nationalist struggle and Russian atrocities, and have turned both global and domestic attention toward eradicating terrorism.

In addition to terrorist acts, the Chechen rebels began to lose the battle for their own population's support. As early as 1999, and at the start of the second phase of hostilities, there were numerous reports that Chechen rebels were allowing foreign fighters to inflict violence against anyone who was seen collaborating with or accommodating Russian forces.[61] Moreover, the rebels had to contend with former Chechen rebels who switched their allegiance at the start of the Second War, assumed leadership positions, and could relate to the populations wants and needs. As was mentioned earlier, Ramzon Kadyrov, the president of Chechnya, was a former Chechen rebel who is a descendant of one of Chechnya's oldest and most favorably regarded clans and has been recently credited with "marginalising the influence of radical Islam, which began to take hold in the region amidst the devastation of the first war."[62] Further, proof in the form of reconstruction and a return of ethnic heritage manifested by the Sufi religion has demonstrated a normalcy that has been embraced by a much beleaguered and weary population.

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[59] Gessen, "Chechnya: What Drives the Separatists to Commit such Terrible Outrages?"

[60] Parfitt, "The Battle for the Soul of Chechnya," 2007.

[61] Seely, *Russo-Chechen Conflict, 1800-2000: A Deadly Embrace*, 305.

[62] Steven Eke. "Profile: Ramzan Kadyrov." in *BBC News* (April 5, 2007). http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6530833.stm (accessed August 25, 2009).

	Strategic Goals	Narrative	Frame	Proof
Chechen Rebels	Chechen independence Formation of a Caliphate	Resistance to Russian rule Islamic religious solidarity (extremist)	Tribal Sufi Islam	Terrorist Acts Targeted Chechen population Embraced extreme Islam
Russia	Restore Russian control	Quell rebellion to ensure internal security and defeat criminality Defeat terrorism	Global terrorism	Targeted and destroyed terrorists Rebuilding projects Partnered with former Chechen rebels

Figure 6. Comparison of Chechen Rebel and Russian Narratives in the Second Chechen War.

G. CONCLUSION

In the First Chechen War, the Chechen rebels were able to generate a superior narrative based on the strategic goal of forming an independent state of Chechnya. This narrative, combined with an innovative doctrine and skillful warfighting, allowed for the defeat of the Russian forces despite a huge disparity in both manpower and material. Moreover, the Chechen strategy was consistent with historically familiar themes including resistance to Russian rule, self-determination and Islamic religious solidarity that appealed to the Chechen population and encouraged the Chechen rebels. The Chechens masterfully applied these themes against Russian acts of aggression and retribution against the population, which served as proof that Russian actions were self-serving with no intention of bettering the life of the Chechen citizen, all of which was consistent with the narrative they had created. Not only were the Russians unwilling to appeal to the Chechen population, they also lacked internal and external consensus from both the Russian people and the world respectively. The Russian's military's maltreatment of the Chechen populace led to battlefield losses and reinforced a failed

narrative where Russians are not superior, cannot achieve their political and economic goals, and are unable to defeat criminality associated with the Chechens.

	Phase I		Phase II	
	Chechen	Russian	Chechen	Russian
Consistency	+	-	-	+
Familiarity	+	-	-	+
Proof	+	-	-	+
Adaptability	+	-	-	+

Figure 7. Comparison of the Performance of Independent Variables.

In the Second Chechen War, the Russian's military actions remained much the same as in the First Chechen War, however, they seized on the concept of fighting terrorism to alter their narrative. This, in turn, enabled them to adapt to changing world sentiment and effectively harness both internal and external support. Just as important, they used the familiarity of former Chechen rebels in establishing an effective proxy government. The Russians also provided consistency through programs that rebuilt the country and encouraged local traditions such as the Sufi Islam religion. Proof was provided by the Russians, linking Chechen rebels to Afghani terrorist training camps and international terrorism, as well as acts of terrorism that had taken place in Russia proper. Moreover, proof was further manifested through the improved lives of average Chechen citizen and has led to a fragile reconciliation with the Chechen population.

Conversely, the Chechen rebels failed to adapt their narrative to the changing circumstances surrounding the "global war on terrorism." While they were still tenacious, innovative, and effective fighters, the Chechen rebels lost sight of the familiar goal of Chechen independence, turned their back on local traditions, and embraced more extreme forms of Islam, which were then forced upon the population. Further, they lost critical external support based on terrorist actions that further reinforced the Russian narrative. Lastly, they were unable to prove that they are true ethno-nationalist separatists seeking self-determination and independence rather than forming a religious society based on

extremist ideology. While the Chechen rebels will most certainly continue to fight courageously, it is their inability to adequately change their narrative that will doom their cause and will allow the Russians to maintain their power and control over the country.

V. CHANGING THE STORY TO WIN IN IRAQ

When U.S. forces entered Baghdad in 2003, the world possessed a bifurcated view of the invasion; the U.S. viewed themselves as liberators while the rest of the world community held an unfavorable view of the American led war.[63] During the run-up to the invasion, polling indicated that the American public was reluctant to support unilateral action to remove Saddam Hussein from power unless it was to prevent his further development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).[64] Toward this goal, the Bush administration developed a narrative and produced intelligence that successfully built domestic support for the March 2003 invasion of Iraq. Although the American narrative was initially effective with an internal audience, it failed to garner significant support outside the United States. Ironically, by 2006, the security situation in Iraq was rapidly deteriorating and the country's slide into civil war seemed inevitable. Catalyzing the sectarian strife that lie at the heart of this violence was Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). It was not until 2007, following first a significant shift in both narrative and strategy, as well as the commitment of additional resources, that the U.S. able to turn the tide of this swelling insurgency and ultimately shift popular support away from the terrorists.

In order to understand the role that competing narratives played in Iraq, this case will be divided into two longitudinal phases. The first phase starts prior to the U.S. invasion in 2003 to "liberate" Iraq and runs through high point of sectarian strife in late 2006. The second phase is called the surge that, for the purposes of this case study, starts with GEN David Petraeus' assumption of command of Multi National Forces Iraq. Each of these phases is significant in that they mark distinct points in the evolution of the U.S. and AQI narrative. During the first phase, U.S.'s lack of a good narrative empowered Iraqi insurgent groups, most notably AQI. Conversely, during the Surge, the U.S.'s ability to correct this deficiency resulted in the marginalization of AQI and the stabilization of Iraq.

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[63] Pew Global Attitudes Project. "General Public Opinion in the Bush Years (2001-2008)." http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1059/global-opinion-bush-years (accessed December 6, 2009).

[64] The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "Public Struggles with Possible War in Iraq." http://people-press.org/commentary/?analysisid=60 (accessed December 6, 2009).

Initially, the U.S. narrative focused on Iraq's possession of WMD during the run up to the 2003 invasion and shifted to democracy in 2004. Both narratives were expressed to the Iraqi people through a very secular frame. From a U.S. perspective, the fact that Iraqis had voted on a constitution and elected a government seemed to provide substantial proof of the validity of the U.S. narrative. Alternately, the U.S. narrative failed to resonate with other world partners, to include traditional allies such as Great Britain, Australia, and Canada. A 2005 poll conducted by World Public Opinion.org showed that a majority of the public within allied nations disagreed with the war in Iraq and felt that their nations' troops should be immediately withdrawn from the conflict.[65]

Alternately, AQI's narrative touted the group's role as the vanguards of an Islamic revival, the illegitimacy and apostate nature of the U.S. and its Iraqi allies, and called for the establishment of a Sunni Muslim Caliphate. In support of their narrative, AQI was able to leverage a plethora of mistakes and missteps by the U.S. that included: the questionable intelligence that the U.S. used to justify pre-emptive war in Iraq, growing dissatisfaction with the heavy handed tactics the U.S. military favored in Iraq, public revulsion of detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib prison, and the escalating cycle of violence between Shia and Sunni Iraqis. All of which served to highlight the inconsistency between the U.S.'s narrative of liberation and their actions.

In an interview with Al Jazeera in September 2004, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell stated,

> We know we will defeat this insurgency and we know that we will drive forward to have elections, elections not just that the United States wants to have, but the Iraqi people want to have. And we are not going to be deterred from achieving the goal that we set out for ourselves to eliminate a terrible dictatorship and put in place a democracy.[66]

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[65] Clay Ramsay and Angela Stephens, "Among Key Iraq Partners, Weak Public Support for Troop Presence." http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/breuropera/74.php?nid=&id=&pnt=74 (accessed December 6, 2009).

[66] Colin Powell. "September 29, 2004 Interview with Al Jazeera." (2004), http://iraq.usembassy.gov/iraq/040929_goals.html (accessed July 26, 2009).

Secretary Powell's interview clearly illustrates the essential elements of the U.S.'s democratically focused narrative and its policy of attempting to stabilize Iraq through force of arms.

COL Ralph O. Baker, who commanded an army brigade in Baghdad during 2003–2004, noted that this resulted in a narrative focused on a U.S., not an Iraqi audience,

> The concept of "better" proved to be a terrible cultural misperception on our part because we, the liberators, equated better with not being ruled by a brutal dictator. In contrast, a better life for Iraqis implied consistent, reliable electricity; food; medical care; jobs; and safety from criminals and political thugs.[67]

Similarly, operations conducted by the U.S. military that were intended to defeat insurgents, resulted in growing dissatisfaction among Iraqis with the U.S. presence in their country. In describing these U.S. military operations, a military police battalion commander, attached to the 4th Infantry Division in 2003, is quoted as saying, "I think they used excessive force, as if their goal was just to kill people and break things. It's just not a great way to win the support of local Iraqis. I think that many of them helped start the insurgency."[68] Consequently, the U.S. failed to provide any positive proof to the Iraqi people on the merits of democracy.

Ultimately, the U.S. narrative, by initially focusing on WMD, lacking consistency, and having problems providing supporting proof, created fertile ground for Iraqi insurgent groups to exploit.

A. THE AQI NARRATIVE

To understand AQI's narrative, one has to begin with Al Qaeda's founding principles; arch-conservative Islamic reform within all Muslim societies and martial

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[67] Ralph O. Baker. "The Decisive Weapon." (2006), http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume4/july_2006/7_06_3.html (accessed July 21, 2009).

[68] Amit R. Paley and Joshua Partlow. "Evolution of a U.S. General In Iraq: No. 2 Commander Transformed Tactics." in *The Washington Post.(* February 16, 2008), httpwww.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2008/02/15/AR2008021503716_pf.html (accessed May 5, 2009), 2.

resistance to perceived Western aggression. Both beliefs emerged from Osama Bin Laden's experience in Afghanistan, and his association with, and exposure to conservative Islamic scholars and their radical teachings.

As Al Qaeda surfaced in Iraq, both their goals and their narrative remained consistent with Osama Bin Laden's founding principles for Al Qaeda.[69] However, AQI further refined the goals to call for:

> The removal of U.S. forces from Iraq.
>
> To wage Jihad to liberate all Muslim territories from infidels and apostates, and establish sharia law in Iraq.
>
> To support Muslims everywhere, restore their dignity—which the invaders and traitors have desecrated—reassert their usurped rights and improve their general situation.
>
> To establish a wise caliphate similar to the theocracy established by the Prophet Mohammed.[70]

In support of their cause, AQI was able to leverage Sunni Iraqi dissatisfaction with U.S. forces and leverage this to gain support for their narrative. Ayman al-Zawahiri,in a letter he wrote AQI leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in July 2005, noted the motivating influence that attacks against the U.S. have with Muslim audiences. Zawahiri deftly noted the necessity of gaining popular support and the role that the media would play in providing proof in support of their cause. He further cautioned al-Zaeqawi to refrain from sectarian attacks and operations that caused civilian casualties or AQI could risk the loss of popular support.[71]

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69 Christophe Blanchard. *Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology*, (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2006).

70 Ahmed S. Hashim. *Iraq's Sunni Insurgency* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2009).

71 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi," (2005), http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/report/2005/zawahiri-zarqawi-letter_9jul2005.htm (accessed July 25, 2009).

	Strategic Goals	Narrative	Frame	Proof
AQI	Establish Sunni Caliphate, Drive U.S. from Iraq	Jihad as Counter-Crusade	Sunni Islam	Violent attacks against U.S. and Iraqis Population intimidation
U.S.	Liberate Iraq Defeat Terrorists, WMD	A democratic Iraq is a stable Iraq, Defeat AQI through force of arms	Secular Western Democracy	Heavy handed tactics, Focus on military Operations, Erosion of basic services, No WMD

Figure 8. Comparison of pre-Surge AQI and U.S. Narratives.

Consequently, when Sunni Iraqis compared these two competing narratives, they chose what seemed to be these lesser of two evils: AQI. In support of the narrative, AQI was able to communicate to Sunni Iraqis through the familiar, and legitimate, frame of Islam as well as provide ample proof to substantiate their claims and justify their ways and means. The visible proof AQI provided through violent attacks against coalition forces seemingly in retaliation for heavy-handed coalition treatment of the population served to provide the evidence that the Sunni population needed to choose to support AQI.

B. THE REBIRTH OF THE U.S. NARRATIVE

In January of 2007, President George W. Bush unveiled a new plan that, in addition to an increase in the number of soldiers and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Iraq, called for greater outreach into Iraqi communities. This change in strategy called for the establishment of small among the Iraqi population, allowing for greater outreach among the Iraq people.

The origins of this shift in policy can be traced to *The National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* that was published by the White House late in 2005. While the document has been criticized for not issuing a clear strategic plan based on "serious strategic review," it did express an approach to countering the insurgency that had taken hold in

Iraq.[72] The document identifies three broad tracks that would be pursued in order to defeat the insurgency; political, security and economic. The political track called for isolation of the extremists from the population, the engagement of persons and organizations who fall outside the current political process and the building of institutions that contribute to the stability of the country. The security track was used to clear areas of insurgents, hold areas to deny their use by insurgents, and build "Iraqi Security Forces and the capacity of local institutions to deliver services, advance the rule of law, and nurture civil society." Finally, the economic track sought to overhaul the economy, build and maintain infrastructure, and improve the lives of all Iraqis.[73]

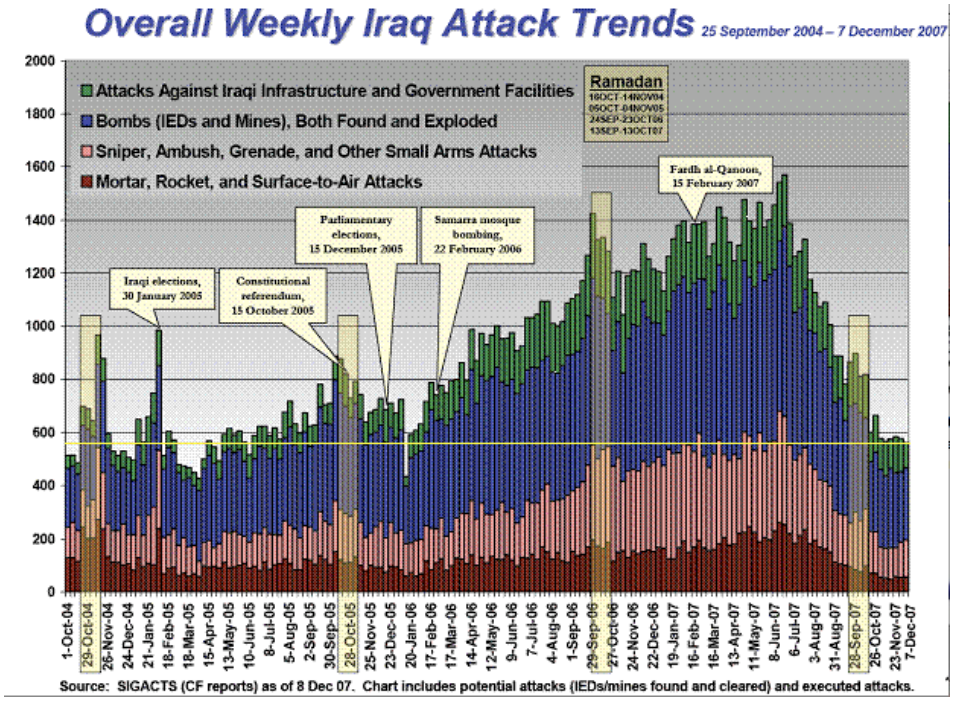

Figure 9. Overall Weekly Attack Trends in Iraq, 2004–2007.[69]

[72] Thomas E. Ricks. *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq*, 2006-2008 (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009), 14.

[73] National Security Council. *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2005), 8–9.

This new plan established a network of small outposts that worked in conjunction with local tribal networks to protect the population rather than just performing combat operations against terrorists and militias. "The Surge" as it was called, sent an additional 20,000 U.S. troops to Iraq while extending the tours of units that were already in country. These additional resources enabled the creation of small outposts in Iraqi towns and neighborhoods that enabled the U.S. and Iraqi security forces to better secure the population and create conditions that promoted improvements in governance and economics.[74] As the graph in Figure 1 demonstrates, protecting the population coupled with economic and governmental improvements worked in combination to reverse rising rates of violence.[75] These tasks were only accomplished through the establishment of these small outposts and the prioritization of constructive dialogue with Sunni tribal leaders.

MG Mick Bednarek, who served as the 25th Infantry Division's Deputy Commanding General for Operations during the Awakening noted,

> [The change in U.S. policy] helped us earn the trust and confidence of Iraqis. We were able to go out, mentor legitimate security forces, co-opt local neighborhood watches that later became known as the "Sons of Iraq," and help tribal leaders sit down and reconcile. The solution to a lot of Iraq's problems worked themselves out once we all started to work together for a political, not a military, solution.[76]

C. WHAT CAUSED 'THE AWAKENING'?

While in some regards the social movement known as the "The Awakening" can be traced to Al Anbar province, this movement was a national phenomenon that exemplified Sunni Iraqi rejection of AQI. Once Sunni leaders started to observe positive outcomes resulting from the change in the U.S.'s narrative coupled with AQI's actions that undermined their narrative, the result was a wholesale rejection of AQI; their goals,

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[74] MAJ Niel Smith and LTC Sean MacFarland. "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," in *Military Review* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combined Arms Center, March-April 2008).

[75] Kenneth Katzman. *Al Qaeda in Iraq: Assessment and Outside Links* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, August 15, 2008).

[76] MG Mick Bednarek, June 16, 2009 Interview.

their strategies, as well as their tactics. In short, AQI's narrative proved to be incongruous with the majority of the Sunni population's vision of the future of their tribes and their country.[77]

The rift between AQI and the Sunni population generally focused on four major themes; their identity as Iraqis, politics, business and religion. Further, once AQI sensed that their excesses alienated Sunni tribes, they failed to adequately adjust their narrative. Instead, AQI targeted tribal leaders and the population, both of whose support was crucial for AQI's existence and survival. Attacks against the population and tribal leaders, rather than having the desired coercive effect, undermined their consistency and served to galvanize Sunni rejection of AQI.

	Strategic Goals	Narrative	Frame	Proof
AQI	Establish Sunni Caliphate Drive U.S. from Iraq	Cause is justified by Islam U.S. is apostate	Sunni Islam	Violent attacks against U.S. and Iraqis Population intimidation
U.S.	Liberate Iraq Defeat Terrorists	Securing the population Improving governance and economics	Basic needs	Small outposts to secure population Increased availability of basic needs and services

Figure 10. Comparison of pre-Surge AQI and U.S. Narratives.

The Sunni population places a very high value on their identity as Iraqis. While AQI was concerned with broader objectives, such as achieving victory over the U.S. and establishment of an Islamic caliphate throughout the Middle East, Iraqi Sunnis were more concerned with Iraq-centric issues.[78] Similarly, Iraqi Sunnis did not look upon the often indiscriminate targeting and killing of innocent Iraq citizens, by AQI Insurgents and foreign fighters, favorably. One prominent Sheik, Osama al-Jada'an, from the Al-Anbar province, who was later murdered by AQI, was quoted as saying,

[77] COL Christopher Gibson, June 19, 2009 interview.

78 Kenneth Katzman, *Al Qaeda in Iraq*, 12.

> We realized that these foreign terrorists were hiding behind the veil of the noble Iraqi resistance. They claim to be striking at the US occupation, but the reality is that they are killing innocent Iraqis in the markets, in mosques, in churches and in our schools.[79]

Likewise, there seemed to be a power struggle between homegrown Sunni insurgents and AQI as to who was in charge of and had control over the insurgency. The Sunni population, its leaders and local insurgents did not want to be governed and controlled by AQI in the same manner that they did not want to be ruled by the Iraqi Shia or U.S. Military forces.[80]

Politically, the Iraqi Sunnis felt that AQI was hindering their ability to participate in political process and was ruining their chances of sharing power with the Shia and the Kurds.[81] Consequently, several Sunni politicians encouraged Sunnis to vote in the provincial and national elections of late 2006, early 2007. However, AQI was strongly opposed to participation in these elections because it added to the legitimacy of the Iraqi political process that had been put in place.[82]

Another cause of great dissatisfaction with AQI had to do with simple economics. Most tribes support themselves and their members through various enterprises to include construction, importing and exporting businesses, trade, and smuggling operations. AQI had severely inhibited the ability to of the tribes to earn income by closing down businesses that did not meet with AQI's approval and taking over businesses that suited their needs. Moreover, the businesses that did remain in the hands of the tribe were negatively affected by violent and AQI inspired actions that were seen as "bad for business."[83]

Differences over religion can also be seen as a main contributing factor that cemented the tribes' desire to split with AQI. As David Kilcullen writes in his article, "Anatomy of a Tribal Revolt,"

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79 Ahmed S. Hashim, *Iraq's Sunni Insurgency*, 64.

80 Kenneth Katzman, *Al Qaeda in Iraq*, 12.

81 Kenneth Katzman, *Al Qaeda in Iraq*, 12.

82 Ahmed S. Hashim, *Iraq's Sunni Insurgenc*y, 64.

83 David Kilcullen, "Anatomy of a Tribal Revolt," 2.

> Islam, of course, is a key identity marker when dealing with non-Muslim outsiders, but when all involved are Muslim, kinship trumps religion. And in fact, most tribal Iraqis I have spoken with consider AQ's brand of "Islam" utterly foreign to their traditional and syncretic version of the faith.[84]

In addition to the AQI brand of Islam being foreign to their sensibilities of Iraqi Sunnis, they reportedly enforced strict Sharia law to include:

- Requiring the male population to grow beards
- Separation between males and females
- Banning the consumption of alcohol

In some instances, death was the consequence for not adhering to AQI's stringent codes of behavior.[85]

The Sunni population's identity as Iraqis, AQI's hindering their ability to participate in political process and earn a living, fundamental differences over religion, and enforcement of strict Islamic law contributed to the Sunni rejection of AQI. When put together and presented as a narrative, AQI's 'story' was extremely inconsistent when measured against observable proof. Both the extreme nature of AQI's goals and the inconsistency of their actions in comparison to their narrative resulted in AQI's subsequent rejection by both the Sunni leadership and the population in general. Consequently, the sheiks and the population chose to throw their support behind the U.S.. This decision was based on the observing that the U.S.'s goals, narratives and actions were both consistent and offered a favorable alternative to AQI's inconsistent and extreme story.

The Sunni Awakening is a perfect example of a social movement that was encouraged and allowed to succeed. When the U.S. saw that the Sunni tribes were dissatisfied with the status quo, local commanders took a chance and supported the tribes in their effort to severe their ties with AQI. In addition, U.S. policies that encouraged protection of the population allowed for the arming of Sunnis and succeeded in incorporating them in to the U.S./Iraqi Government's security design. Similarly, tribal

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[84] Kilcullen, "Tribal Revolt," 2.

[85] Kenneth Katzman, *Al Qaeda in Iraq*, 2.

leaders embraced the American narrative and were convinced that if they switched sides that they would be able to withstand and prevent AQI attacks based on their collective power and the backing of U.S. forces. Moreover, they believed that they would have a better life and more political opportunity by working with the Americans as opposed to AQI. By trusting and arming Sunnis, some of whom had actively supported the terrorists, the U.S. was able to effectively turn portions of AQI against itself.

D. CONCLUSION

The rise of the Awakening movement and the dramatic increase in security in Iraq has been attributed to several factors. However, AQI's missteps and the United States' adaptable and superior use of the narrative is a viable explanation for why the Sunni population ultimately chose to support the coalition and Iraqi Government cause. The U.S. was able to generate significant internal consensus and support by changing its strategy, policy, and actions and consequently its narrative with regard to the Sunni population. Conversely, AQI's failure to develop or adequately adjust their narrative combined with their use of violence and naïve view of the Iraqi Sunnis, was a large contributor to the Awakening's formation. Consequently, when the Sunni leadership and population weighed the pros and cons of each narrative against the presence or absence of physical evidence to support each group's claims, they found the U.S. narrative more appealing and subsequently rejected AQI.

During the first phase of the war in Iraq, from 2003 to late 2006, the U.S. employed a narrative that was grossly inferior to AQI's. First, the American narrative lacked consistency with its strategic goals. Second, it lacked familiarity with the Iraqi population. Third, the inconsistency between the U.S. narrative and actions failed to provide any measure of proof to substantiate the U.S.'s claims. Lastly, from 2003 through late 2006, the U.S. stubbornly stayed on the wrong message and failed to adapt either its strategy or narrative in the face of rapidly deteriorating conditions in Iraq.

Alternately, AQI was able to leverage the U.S.'s inconsistency and heavy-handed tactics to their favor. Their Salafist message was very consistent with their strategic goals, contained frames that were very familiar to Sunni Iraqis, both their attacks on U.S.

forces and U.S. missteps provided ample proof in support of AQI's narrative, and AQI's narrative was broad enough that it easily adapted to changes in the environment.

	Phase 1		Phase 2	
	AQI	U.S.	AQI	U.S.
Consistency	+	-	-	+
Familiarity	+	-	+	+
Proof	+	-	-	+
Adaptability	+	-	-	+

Figure 11. Comparison of the Performance of Independent Variables.

However, during the second phase, the U.S. was able to reverse its fortunes by changing both its narrative and its strategy to deal with the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Iraq. Through the establishment of outposts to protect the population and creating conditions that helped foster improvements in economics and governance, the U.S. was able to craft a narrative that was consistent with its strategic goals, familiar to the Iraqi people, supported by substantial proof.

By comparison, AQI failed to adapt to changes caused by the surge and, as a result, experienced a complete reversal of fortune. Acts of intimidation to try and shore up support among Sunni Iraqis only served to highlight the inconsistency between AQIs strategic goals and their narrative. Yet while their narrative retained familiar themes, AQI failed to provide any positive proof to substantiate their narrative's claims.

During the first phase of the Iraq war, AQI benefitted from the U.S.'s inconsistent and unfamiliar narrative. However, as the table in Figure 9 demonstrates, the U.S. was able to turn the tables on AQI in all areas save one. Consequently, the Awakening was a manifestation of Iraqi Sunnis weighing the evidence provided by AQI in support of their narrative and the evidence provided by the U.S. in support of their narrative. Ultimately, acting in a manner similar to a jury, Iraqi Sunnis expressed their discontent with AQI's by switching their support from AQI to the U.S. and the Government of Iraq.

VI. CONCLUSION: CHANGING THE STORY TO WIN

In the Kenya, Chechnya, and Iraq case studies, the side with the stronger narrative was generally more successful. During the first phase of each case, the terrorists or insurgents possessed the stronger narrative, while their foes were able to change their fortunes by adapting their strategies and their corresponding narratives. While there was some variance inside each of these three cases, the performance of the independent variables between cases remains consistent with the congruence model used for case selection.[86] Similarly, the performance of the four independent variables suggests that it is a combination of factors, rather than one single element alone, that makes one narrative stronger than the other. Likewise, the performance of these IVs within each case seems to point to the fact that the population acts as an evidence-based jury when determining which side they should support.

A. CONSISTENCY

In each case, the group whose narrative was most consistent with its strategic goals was more successful than its opponent. This congruence between a group's strategic goals and its narrative suggests that the latter can be unwittingly legitimized by their foes' actions. Inequity in British treatment of native Kenyans, Russian suppression of Chechen self-determinism, and the deterioration of conditions under U.S. occupation in Iraq are examples of how these conditions provide fertile ground to legitimize a group's goals and their narrative.

One interesting finding from these three cases is that the need for consistency applies not only to goals, but also with behavior. In the first phase of each case, the counter-terrorists' behavior was inconsistent with their stated goals. The British sought to defeat the Mau Mau by punishing the population, the Russians sought to crush Chechen rebels by bombarding urban centers, and the U.S. conducted military operations that negatively impacted on the Iraqi population. Thus the inconsistency between these

[86] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Ma: MIT Press, 2005), 181.

groups' stated goals ran contrary to their behavior. The consequence of this inconsistency was the legitimization of their adversaries' claims and causes.

B. FAMILIARITY

While the use of themes and images that are familiar to the target audience are helpful, it is not an absolute requirement in order for a narrative to be effective. In both Chechnya and Iraq, the counter-terrorists benefitted from frame alignment and extension by leveraging culturally familiar themes and images within their narrative. This is evident through the Russians' co-opting of Sufi Islam in support of their goals and the United States' use of tribal councils to support the awakening. Conversely, the British, through a combination of population control and resource manipulation, were able to gain the trust and confidence of the Kikuyu without having to make their narrative more familiar to the targeted population.

However, the data also suggests that, while familiarity helps gain the trust and confidence of the population, this presents a narrow window of opportunity. Consistency trumped familiarity in a way. As seen in Iraq, once AQI actions became increasingly inconsistent with their narrative, the Sunni population acted on this evidence and switched their support towards the U.S. and away from AQI.

Phase I						
	Mau Mau	British	Chechens	Russians	AQI	U.S.
Consistency	+	-	+	-	+	-
Familiarity	+	-	+	-	+	-
Proof	+	-	+	-	+	-
Adaptability	+	-	+	-	+	-
Phase II						
	Mau Mau	British	Chechens	Russians	AQI	U.S.
Consistency	-	+	-	+	-	+
Familiarity	+	-	-	+	+	+
Proof	-	+	-	+	-	+
Adaptability	-	+	-	+	-	+

Figure 12. Performance of the Independent Variables across the Cases.

C. PROOF

The performance of the independent variables in each of the cases suggests that the element of proof is one of two variables that is a necessary condition for creation of a good narrative. In each of the three cases, groups that consistently provided tangible proof to legitimize their narrative were able to win that phase of the conflict. Conversely, groups that failed to provide consistent proof in support of their narrative lost.

The performance of this independent variable highlights the population's role as an evidence-driven jury, whose verdict results in one group gaining support at the expense of their adversary. Namely, the proof serves the population the same way that evidence serves a jury; it legitimizes one set of competing claims.

Conversely, inconsistency between a group's narrative and actions seemed to both de-legitimize their narrative and reinforce the legitimacy of their adversary's claims. In Kenya, British colonial policies reinforced Mau Mau claims for equality. Similarly, heavy-handed operations conducted by the Russians in Chechnya and the U.S. in Iraq were perceived by the population as inconsistent with claims made by the counter-terrorists. In each case, the inability of the counter-terrorists to provide proof to support their narrative served the unwitting purpose of reinforcing the legitimacy of the terrorists' claims.

D. ADAPTABILITY

Similar to proof, adaptability is the other independent variable whose performance in each case suggests that having an adaptable narrative is necessary condition for its success. Adaptability can be manifested in two ways; either a narrative sufficiently generalized to account for variance in the environment, or the ability of a group to change its narrative to meet changing conditions.

During the first phase of each case, the terrorists possessed a narrative that was general enough to both address their goals, but also to capitalize on their adversaries' missteps and inconsistencies. The primary way that this phenomenon was manifested can be seen in popular support for the terrorists that resulted from a reaction to perceived

mistreatment of civilians by counter-terrorists. Alternately, in each case, the counter-terrorists adapted their narratives and their strategies to account for changing conditions.

Interestingly, in each case, once the counter-terrorists revamped their narrative and began to win, the terrorists failed to adapt their narrative in an effort to regain lost initiative. The shift in conditions corresponding with the shift in popular support from the terrorists to the counter-terrorists resulted in variance outside the "sweet spot" allowed by the terrorists' generalized narratives.

E. LESSONS LEARNED

As demonstrated in Kenya, Chechnya, and Iraq, attempts by either the terrorists or counter-terrorists to drive a wedge between their adversaries and the populations by punishing or intimidating the latter proved counter-productive. In fact, in all cases, it drove the population away from their perceived intimidators. Consequently, it is important to note that population support has to be gained through persuasion, not coercion. British attempts to punish the Kikuyu tribe, Russian mistreatment of Chechen civilians in Grozny, and heavy-handed treatment of Iraqi civilians by U.S. forces in Iraq only served to legitimize the terrorists' narratives in each case. While controlling the population is at times necessary, great care has to be exercised when dealing with the population in order to deny an adversary use of this sort of "haven."

Similarly, in each of the three cases, one of the underlying faults in the counter-terrorists' narratives lie in their focus on the wrong population. The initial British, Russian, and U.S. narratives failed to address the conflict through the eyes of the targeted population. This is less a matter of culture or frame and more a matter of lacking empathy. The British mistook the Mau Mau for a religious cult, the Russians failed to understand Chechen desire for self-determination, and the U.S. failed to understand the importance Iraqis placed on delivery of basic services. Simply by trying to look at the issue through the eyes of the targeted population, the counter-terrorists could have mitigated this flaw in both their strategy and their narrative.

Gaining the trust and confidence of the population was a necessary condition for success in each case. In order to gain trust, a group must have a narrative that is consistent, supported by observable actions, and addresses current environmental conditions. Instead of attempting to win "hearts and minds" and trying to garner popularity within the population, more effort should be focused on consistent behavior and avoiding any actions that could be construed as hypocritical. The struggle between terrorists and counter-terrorists is violent and as such is not a popularity contest. As the British proved in Kenya, it is possible to gain the trust and confidence of the population thus wresting their support away from the terrorists without trying to be popular.

One final lesson that can be drawn from these cases is that narratives need to be managed. In each case, both sides lacked a formal mechanism to ensure the overall consistency and effectiveness of their strategy, their narrative, and their actions. However had a group managed their narrative, much in the way that the Soviets managed their Cold War propaganda, the outcomes of each case could have been markedly different. For the terrorists, a managed narrative would have adapted to changes in the environment enabling them to pace changes in their adversary's narrative. For the counter-terrorists in each case, managing their narrative from the onset would have either prevented or mitigated their inferior first phase results.

F. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

When graphing the performance of the four independent variables used in this study, the result was a diametric plot. Phase I of each case plotted in the lower left of the graph where the values corresponded to strong performance for the independent variables in the terrorists' narrative and poor performance for the independent variables in the counter-terrorists' narrative. Conversely, during the second phase of each case, the plots reversed and reflected the strong performance of the counter-terrorists' improved narrative relative to the correspondingly poor performance of the terrorists' narrative.

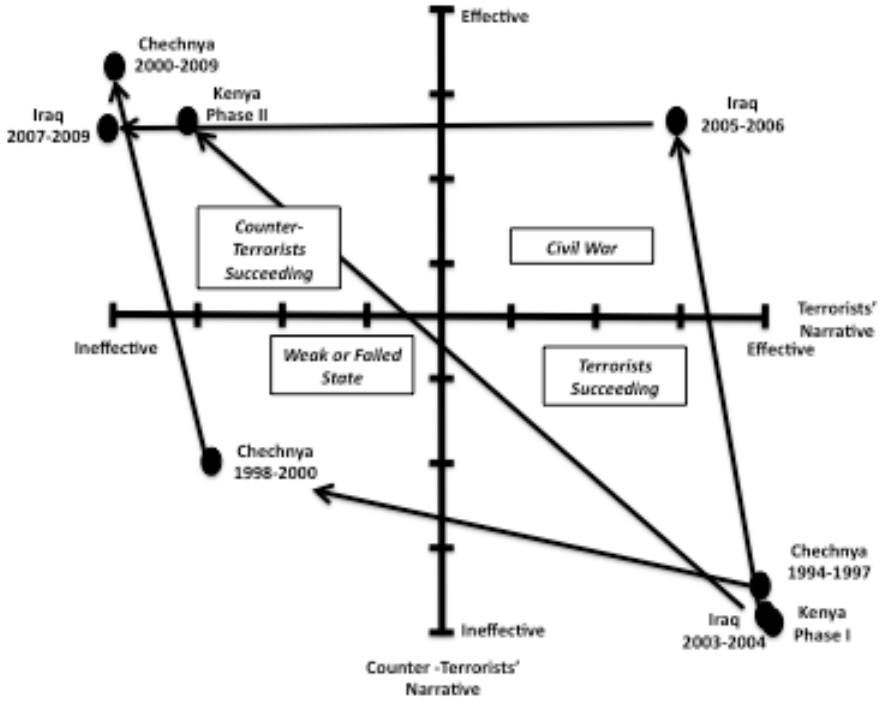

Figure 13. Performance of the Independent Variables per Phase.

Similarly, this outcome of graphing the performance of the independent variables in each of these three cases suggests that that the theory of a terror group needing a strong narrative to win only applies to a finite number of cases. In cases where each side has a strong narrative with strong performance among the independent variables, the outcome could possibly be a civil war, where each side is able to legitimize its claims to such an extent that the population is split between two competing verdicts in their story models. Essentially, in this model, the population is similar to a deadlocked jury.

Alternately, in cases where both side have bad narratives with poor performing independent variables, neither side would be able to generate enough support to support their actions. Depending on environmental conditions, this outcome might manifest itself in a weak state where political actors lack sufficient vision, consensus, support, and legitimacy to act or in a failed state where no one party is able to either prevent their society's descent into chaos or restore order.

G. DOCTRINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Current Information Operations doctrine, in both JP 3-13 and FM 3-13, focus almost exclusively on tactics, techniques, and procedures to disrupt an enemy commander's decision cycle. This focus resides almost exclusively at the tactical, and perhaps, operational levels of war. However, the results of this study suggest that military planners and policy makers alike need to understand the role that competing narratives play in the struggle for influence over the population. The framework for evaluation of competing narratives and their associated independent variables provides a recommended outline for assessing the composition and performance of competing narratives.

H. POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS

For the U.S. in its pursuit of al Qaeda and associated terror groups in Afghanistan, the outcome of this study provides a few policy recommendations:

- Ensure that U.S. strategy and narratives remain consistent regarding both the justification for continued U.S. involvement in the region and desired endstates.
- Ensure that U.S. narratives, their associated goals, and resultant actions are not only consistent, but also address environmental concerns when viewed through the eyes of the targeted population.
- All U.S. and allied operations take great care to prevent any mistreatment of the Afghan populace.
- Institute a mechanism, from the national policy to tactical level, that would manage the U.S. narrative to ensure that all actions and operations remain consistent with national goals and are effective in accomplishing these goals.
- Goals, the strategy to achieve stated goals, and narratives must be nested and adapted to a given situation, familiar to the populations involved, consistently applied and be provable in order to be successful in any given

conflict. This applies from the policy maker creating the policy to the foot soldier operating amidst the targeted population.

I. AREAS OF ADDITIONAL STUDY

In the course of our research, we developed new questions that remain largely unanswered by our study and recommend additional research in these areas:

- What role does marketing play in the competition between narratives?
- How is the model of competing narratives affected by coalitions?
- Are certain channels or forms of media more effective than others for the diffusion of narratives?
- What is the most effective way to present proof to a targeted population?
- What is the effect of narratives on the U.S. population and their support of a conflict?

J. SUMMATION

The three cases in this study have shown the role played by competing narratives in the struggle between terrorist groups and their adversaries. Narratives exert a systematic impact on the ability of a group to achieve its strategic goals through the influence that the narrative has over the group's members, the group's adversaries, and the affected population. Although a group with a good narrative can be defeated, a group with a weak narrative is very unlikely to win. Consequently, as stated in both the lessons learned and recommendations, when combating terrorism or insurgencies, care must be taken to ensure narrative effectiveness. In order to win, and preclude being "wrong footed" by an adversary with a stronger narrative, groups must pay attention to, and manage, their narratives. Ultimately, they must ensure that both their actions and their goals are consistent and focus on winning the trust and confidence of the population.

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